

**MONOTHEISM, PRINCIPAL
ANGELS, AND THE
BACKGROUND OF CHRISTOLOGY**

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades there has been an intensively renewed interest in the origins and development of 'christology', or, to use a broader term intended to take into account religious practices as well as ideas/beliefs, earliest 'devotion' to Jesus. In general, this newer work has emphasized the early period and Jewish religious setting in which this remarkable devotion to Jesus first emerged (e.g., Newman, Davila, Lewis 1999), and scholars have thus explored in what ways Jesus-devotion may have drawn upon Jewish tradition and how it may have represented something innovative. In particular, there are questions about the means by which early believers shaped by Jewish tradition with its concern for the uniqueness of God may have accommodated devotion to Jesus as in some way bearing divine significance. The Qumran texts comprise a major and unique cache of material giving us access to second-temple Jewish religious tradition, and are, thus, integral in all of this investigation (e.g., Segal 1992).

CHAPTER 1 ANCIENT JEWISH MONOTHEISM

FOR A CONTEXTUALLY ORIENTED approach to earliest devotion to Jesus, indeed, and for Jewish religion of the second-temple period as well, perhaps the most important topic is the uniqueness typically ascribed to the one God of the biblical tradition. Both Jewish and non-Jewish sources of the second-temple period portray Jews as holding a distinctive religious stance and practice that involve reserving a unique status to the God of Israel, and a firm refusal to worship any other deity (e.g., Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.3; *Let. Aris.* 134-39; and for discussion, Hurtado 1998). Sometimes, the deities of other peoples are referred to in Jewish texts as superstition, their images simply human products and their worship foolishness (e.g., *Wis* 13-14), and sometimes these deities are portrayed as real, but evil, supernatural beings (e.g., *Jub.* 22:16-17; reflected also in 1 Cor 10:20); but in any case the worship of these gods by the other nations is typically treated as misguided at best. In characteristic second-temple Jewish piety, as there is only one true God who is revealed in Israel's story and witnessed to in the biblical

texts, so worship (by any people) is rightly directed solely to this God. That is, this typical Jewish attitude was not simply a national commitment to a particular deity, or a simple affective preference of one deity among many; it was instead a universalizing claim that only one deity is the legitimate recipient of the worship of all nations.

Although there seem to have been tendencies in this direction in ancient Judaism from at least as early as the Persian period, it is likely that this stance was hardened especially in response to the attempt by Antiochus IV to enforce a policy of religious assimilation upon the Jews living in Judea ca. 167 BCE, which resulted in the Maccabean revolt (1 Macc 1:41-2:27). Thereafter, certainly, for devout Jews the recitation of the '*Shema*', which commences with the declaration that 'the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (or 'the Lord our God, the Lord alone,' from Deut 6:4), became a regular feature of their piety. The 'Nash Papyrus' (second century BCE) and the *mezuzot* found at the Qumran site are physical evidence of the place of the place of this assertion of God's uniqueness in Jewish piety of the time, these items all reflecting the ritual use of the *Shema* (e.g., Lim 2007). Even for urbane Jews such as Philo of Alexandria, God's uniqueness is non-negotiable:

'Let us, then, engrave deep in our hearts this as the first and most sacred of commandments; to acknowledge and honour one God who is above all, and let the idea that gods are many never even reach the ears of the man whose rule of life is to seek for truth in purity and guilelessness' (*Decal.* 65).

In explaining to his readers that Jewish religion is based on the teaching of Moses inscribed on the two stone tables, Flavius Josephus states, 'The first word teaches us

that God is one and that He only must be worshipped' (*Ant.* 3.91). Note the close connection between the assertion of God's uniqueness and the restriction of worship to this one God, a point to which we return later. It is worth noting also that the response ascribed to Jesus in Mark 12:29 to a scribe's question about 'which commandment is the first of all' is a recitation of the *Shema*, reflecting the same religious outlook.

The two main emphases of this Jewish monotheistic rhetoric are God's universal sovereignty and God's absolute uniqueness. God (*Yahweh*) is pictured as the creator and ruler of all things, even over nations that do not acknowledge this God and over the rebellious spirit-beings that oppose God's elect. Even Satan/Belial/Mastema figures are portrayed as rebellious servants and creatures of God, whose vain attempts to thwart God's will actually only serve it by exposing the sinners (through their cooperation with these beings) and by testing and proving the righteous (who resist evil and stand true to God).

God's uniqueness is expressed in various ways, e.g., as the sole uncreated one over against all else, and as exalted above all, including all other species of heavenly beings (e.g., Isa 40:18-26; 41:21-24; 43:11-13; 45:18, 22-25; Psa 95:3-4). Ancient Jewish 'monotheism' did not involve the denial of the existence of other heavenly/divine beings, but instead the firm claim that God is superior to all such beings, unique in standing, power and greatness. These biblical texts are relevant for second-temple Jewish piety precisely because they were held as sacred and shaped beliefs and practices.

Indeed, 'the Lord (God) of hosts' is a frequent biblical epithet that implicitly pictures God being attended by a

huge retinue of other heavenly beings (e.g., Psa 24:10; 46:7, 11), even 'ten thousand times ten thousand' (Dan 7:10; 1 *Enoch* 14:22). Moreover, God is often pictured as presiding over a heavenly council of beings that can be referred to as 'sons of God' (*b^enēy Elohim/Elim*, e.g., Job 1:6) and *Elim* ('gods', e.g., Psa 82:1). Michael Heiser (2004) has persuasively shown that this basic idea, and the usage of these terms, remained prominent in the second-temple period, as is amply reflected in the Qumran texts (e.g., frequently in 4*QShirShabb*). In biblical and second-temple texts, as 'a great King above all gods' (Psa 95:3-4), *Yahweh* is portrayed presiding in imperial majesty over a vast body of heavenly/divine beings whose net significance is to exhibit *Yahweh*'s greatness.

In addition to the prevalence of this rhetoric of God's uniqueness and supremacy, second-temple Jewish piety also typically was characterised by a resolute refusal to offer worship (especially sacrifice) to other deities, or even to the heavenly/divine members of *Yahweh*'s entourage. Indeed, this strong scruple about worship was probably the most outwardly observable and socially significant expression of Jewish 'monotheism'. As Bauckham rightly noted (1981: 322), 'In the exclusive monotheism of the Jewish religious tradition, as distinct from some other kinds of monotheism, it was worship which was the real test of monotheistic faith in religious practice'. In the Maccabean struggle and subsequently, when devout Jews were put under pressure to conform religiously, the demand was that they participate in the worship of other deities (e.g., 1 Macc 1:51), and the refusal of Jews to honour the gods was regarded as perhaps the most anti-social feature of their religion by pagans (e.g., Amir 1987). It should be noted that in the ancient world generally,

worship was the key expression of one's religion: the god(s) one worshipped, and how and when one worshipped. Moreover, the general view was that all the gods were worthy of worship and to refuse them worship was socially offensive and even irreligious. We see the tension created by Jewish refusal to follow this practice reflected in the stories told in Dan 3:1-18 and 6:1-28, narratives which seem intended to show that devout Jews can give loyal service to pagan rulers, so long as they are not expected to compromise their exclusive devotion to their God.

In keeping with other Jewish evidence of the period reflecting Jewish prayer (e.g., as reviewed by Johnson 1948; and Endermalm-Ogawa 1987), the Qumran texts also exhibit this exclusivist practice. *Yahweh* is the sole object of prayer and worship (e.g., Falk 1998; Schuller 2000). The elect join with the heavenly angels in praise and worship to God, as reflected in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, but these beings, though glorious and powerful, are never themselves the recipients of worship. In texts such as the *Hodayot* (1QH^a ; 4Q427-432), God alone is consistently addressed, praised and petitioned. Moreover, unlike the more typical pattern of temples of the larger Greek and Roman environment, which often had images of and altars for several associated deities, in the Jerusalem Temple, sacrifice was offered solely to God, and there was no altar or devotional ritual for any other figure. Although the Roman ruler might be treated as divine by other peoples and had images, priesthoods and cultic rituals devoted to him, in the Jerusalem Temple sacrifice was offered *on behalf* of the Roman Emperor, but not *to* the Emperor.

But some scholars have questioned whether

‘monotheism’ is the right term for this Jewish outlook, however, because the typical dictionary definition of the term is belief in the *existence* of only one deity. Hayman (1991) and others subsequently have noted that in so far as the term connotes the denial of the existence of other heavenly/divine beings it does not seem appropriate. Macdonald (2003: 5-21) has shown how the term ‘monotheism’ originated and acquired its typical meaning in European philosophical debates of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Heiser (2004: 9-18) weighed the adequacy of ‘monotheism’ and other terms for describing second-temple Jewish faith, e.g., ‘henotheism’ (belief in one deity presiding over others), ‘monolatry’ (‘intolerant henotheism,’ the insistence that only the supreme deity be worshipped), and judged that each had its limitations.

Noting these sorts of questions about the term, Hurtado (1998) urged that usage of the term ‘monotheism’ should always be informed by the beliefs and practices of real religious groups, not by artificial definitions framed in abstraction from actual cases of religious belief/practice. If ‘monotheism’ were to be restricted to the belief that there is only one heavenly/divine being, then very few Jews, Christian or Muslims have ever qualified as monotheists. If a definition of a term does not accurately define a real form of religiousness then its usefulness is dubious! In the case of ancient Judaism, ‘monotheism’ can only mean the claims of God’s uniqueness and supremacy over all other beings (including a vast diversity of other spiritual beings), and the strong restriction of worship to this one God alone.

We may also note that this hesitation among some scholars to use the term ‘monotheism’ for ancient Jewish religion is curious, given that other scholars of Roman

antiquity readily speak of 'pagan monotheism', which typically refers to the idea that the many gods are all valid manifestations of some common divine essence (e.g., Athanassiadi and Frede 1999). If this latter sort of view can count as one type of 'monotheism', it is surely even more legitimate to use 'monotheism' for the ancient Jewish emphasis on God's uniqueness. But we must also note the crucial difference, both in belief and practice. Devout Jews typically distinguished sharply between the biblical deity and all others, and likewise restricted cultic worship to this deity. Over against the inclusive tendencies of some philosophical views of the gods, typical Jewish piety involved a singular exclusivity in faith and practice.

In short, 'Jewish monotheism' had its own quite distinctive character in comparison with what is called 'pagan monotheism'. Whatever the term preferred, e.g., 'monotheism', 'intolerant henotheism', 'universalising monolatry', this distinctive religious stance is the crucial phenomenon that marked off second-temple Jewish religiousness from its larger religious environment. Moreover, this strong concern to maintain the uniqueness of the one God is also the key feature of the second-temple Jewish religious matrix of earliest Christianity, in the light of which early Christian devotion to Jesus takes on special historical significance.

CHAPTER 2

PRINCIPAL ANGELS

AS NOTED ALREADY, for ancient Jews the emphasis on the one God was fully compatible with beliefs about other spiritual beings, including those dubiously worshipped by other peoples and also the many heavenly beings that formed Yahweh's entourage. Indeed, in the second-temple period there seems to have been an increased interest in the latter (e.g., Bietenhard 1951). With a very few exceptions, such as the "commander of the army of the Lord" whom Joshua encounters (Josh 5:13-15), the references to "the angel of the Lord" (e.g., Judges 13:3-22), and the mysterious angel in whom God's name is placed and who is assigned to guard and lead Israel into the land prepared for them (Exod 23:20-21), in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament generally God's heavenly host and/or divine council are largely an undifferentiated body. In the second-temple period, however, there was a marked interest in identifying ranks and orders of the heavenly host, and also in naming particular angelic figures, who were sometimes associated with specific functions (e.g., 1 *Enoch* 9-10; 20). In some cases, this or that high angel is

portrayed in remarkably exalted terms, functioning as God's vizier (Hurtado 1988: 71-92; Carrell 1997: 53-76; Collins 2000), a chief-agent figure who acts with special authority, making these figures of particular interest for scholars concerned with the origins of christological claims.

Olyan (1993) showed that often the names of the various angelic orders/ranks and individual angels appear to have been developed by exegesis of particular passages in biblical texts. So, e.g., the Cherubim, Seraphim, Hayyot, Ophannim, Ma'asim, and other orders (as reflected, e.g., in 1 *Enoch* 61:10) developed via exegesis of texts such as 1 Sam 4:4; Isa 6:2-3; and Ezek 1 and 10. But Mach (1992) has provided probably the fullest diachronic study of ancient Jewish beliefs about angelic beings, describing an explosion of interest in them in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

Davidson (1992) analysed references to angels in 1 *Enoch* and the Qumran sectarian texts, noting the influence of dualistic thought in the counter-posed good and evil spirit/angel beings portrayed in these writings. Although this dualism involves two principal angel-beings in opposition to each other, a 'Prince of Light' (Michael) set against Belial and the spirits allied with him (e.g., 1QM xiii.10-18), Davidson concluded that 'there is never a cosmic dualism in which God stands opposite his equal or near-equal' (p. 309). Noll's thesis (1979: 171-84, regrettably never published) helpfully lists the names and ranks of heavenly beings in the Qumran texts: e.g., '*elim*' ('gods', e.g., 1QM xiv, 16; xviii, 6), '*elohim*' ('gods', e.g., 4Q400 Frag. 2, line 5), 'holy ones' (numerous instances in 1QH; 1QSB; 4QShirShabb), 'warriors' (1QH v, 1; viii, 11), 'assembly (of God/holy ones)' (e.g., 11QMelch ii, 10), a

special group of angels called 'chief princes' (e.g., 4Q403 i, 10-25), and others.

Noll also noted (1979: 184-93) in the Qumran texts the importance of the theme of the elect being joined with heavenly angels especially in worship, which seems to be the key point of the text known as 'Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice' (of which there are remnants of several copies, 4Q400-407; Charlesworth and Newsom 1999). Sullivan (2004) traced this and associated themes (e.g., the portrayal of angels in human-like form, and the portrayal of exalted humans in angelic-like form) more broadly through second-temple Jewish texts, with a particular interest in how Jewish angel-speculation might have been drawn upon in early christological beliefs (a matter to which we return in the final section of this discussion).

We have a ready illustration of the interest in particular angels in the representation of Raphael in the book of Tobit, a case where a high angel is portrayed as disguising himself as a mortal. As typical of the named angels, 'Raphael' is really a divine epithet ('God heals'). In a dramatic climactic scene he reveals his prior role in conveying the prayers of Tobit and Sarah to God, and declares himself to be one of seven principal angels given special access to God (Tob 12:12-15). To cite another example, in Dan 8:16; 9:21, the angel Gabriel ('God my hero') is specially assigned by God to help Daniel understand God's plans for Israel.

Michael

But surely the most prominent high angel is Michael ('who is like God?'), first mentioned in Dan 10:13-21, where he is referred to as 'one of the chief princes' (v. 13) and 'your prince' (v. 21). The latter phrase probably

means that Michael has a special responsibility for Israel, which is made explicit in Dan 12:1, where he is referred to as 'the great prince, the protector of the sons of your people', who will arise in the future time of Israel's deliverance and the resurrection of the righteous. Traditions about Michael flourished both in early Judaism and then in early Christianity (Hannah 1999). As Hannah noted (p. 33), the earliest references to Michael (1 *Enoch* 1-36, third century BCE; and Daniel) seem to take for granted that readers know of the figure, which means that interest in him must be very early indeed.

From his survey of evidence, Hannah (1999: 38) judged that 'the tradition of Michael as Israel's champion and guardian was well established in the apocalypses' of the second-temple period. One of the titles applied to Michael is 'Chief Commander' (Greek: *archistratēgos*, e.g., 3 *Bar.* 11:4-8; 2 *Enoch* 22:6; 33:10 [long recension]; recension A of *Test.Abr.*), suggesting both pre-eminence and likely a military leadership role. Michael also is heavenly intercessor for the righteous in some texts (e.g., *Test. Abr.* 14:5-6), but refuses to perform this service for the fallen 'Watchers' (disobedient heavenly beings) in 1 *Enoch* 68:2-5. In 3 *Baruch* 11-15 Michael is portrayed as the heavenly priest who 'holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (11:2) and receives the prayers and merits of the elect and presents them to God. 3 *Baruch* is widely thought to have a late first-century CE provenance, but it likely reflects ideas from still earlier.

Although in some early texts Michael is one of a restricted number of elite angels, Hannah judged that by the first century CE 'Michael had become *the* principal angel, if not everywhere, at least in many circles' (Hannah 1999: 48). It is likely that Michael is 'the angel of the

Presence [of God]' in *Jubilees* 1:27-2:1, a phrase thought to derive from the *Qere* of Isa 63:9 ('In all their distress . . . the angel of his Presence saved them'), both texts alluding to the angel who conducted Israel out of Egypt (Exod 14:19-20).

On the other hand, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* Yahoel is the angel through whom the ineffable name of God operates (10:3-8), probably an allusion to Exodus 23:20, which refers to an angel indwelt by God's name who will guide and exercise authority over Israel. So it appears that the idea of such a principal angel was reasonably widespread, even if the precise identity of the figure varied somewhat.

CHAPTER 3

PRINCIPAL ANGELS IN QUMRAN TEXTS

THE QUMRAN TEXTS amply attest the notion that God has a particular angelic figure who acts as God's special deputy in the care of the elect and the eschatological conflict with evil. Because of the fragmentary condition of the texts, however, it is sometimes not completely clear whether there was one such figure or several designated by varying names and titles.

In some texts, Michael is explicitly singled out, as in *1QM* xvii.6-8, where the elect are assured that in the appointed time when 'the prince of the dominion of wickedness' is to be subdued, God will send 'everlasting aid to the lot of his covenant by the power of the majestic angel with the authority of Michael in everlasting light', and will 'exalt the authority of Michael over all the gods, and the dominion of Israel over all flesh'. *1QS* iii.17-26 describes how God created two spirits, 'the Angel of Darkness' exercising dominion over 'the sons of deceit', and 'the Prince of Lights' who holds dominion over 'all the sons of justice/righteousness', and the text promises that 'the God of Israel and the angel of his truth will assist

all the sons of light'. Though not named, it is a reasonable inference that 'the Prince of Lights' and 'the angel of truth' are the same figure, and that in turn this angel given special authority and care over the elect, is Michael (so also, e.g., Hannah 1999: 65).

There are other references to Michael as well, but the very fragmentary texts in question make it difficult to be certain as to what precisely is said about him. Nevertheless, it is clear that Michael was a prominent figure in the religious outlook reflected in the Qumran scrolls. In 4Q470 Michael apparently mediates a covenant with a certain Zedekiah between God and 'the congregation' (of the elect). 4Q285 refers to a 'Prince of the congregation', who may be a human Messiah-figure, but the text also mentions Michael, although we cannot say confidently what role is ascribed to him here. The opening of 4Q529 (or 4QWords of Michael) refers to 'words of the book which Michael spoke to the angels' which appears to have been some sort of visionary text that promises God's merciful remembrance of creation. Clearly, Michael here has a prominent status, but, again, the incomplete nature of the text makes it difficult to be more specific.

Other texts mention a principal-angel figure but do not name him. 4Q491 (4QWar Scroll) refers to 'the chief [sar] of his angels' who will direct the eschatological battle against the forces of evil (line 3). In 4Q177 (4QCatena), we have another reference to God's 'Angel of Truth', who 'will help all the Sons of Light' delivering them from 'the hand of Belial' (lines 7-9). In the 'War Scroll' (1QM xiii.10-14), we have another reference to 'the Prince of Light' (previously noted in 1QS iii.20), who seems to be a principal-angel figure assigned the role of leading the good angels in battle on behalf of the righteous against

Belial and the spirits linked with him. Editors restore yet another reference to this 'Prince of Light' acting in the same capacity in line 2 of 4Q495, which is commonly taken as fragments of another copy of the War Scroll. Though the epithets vary, the similarities in functions make it a reasonable inference that these references all reflect the notion that God has a particular principal-angel who acts as God's chief deputy in charge of God's angels and is authorised to lead them in the eschatological battle of the forces of light and darkness.

In some other texts we have references to a 'Melchizedek' (whose name probably means 'my king of/is righteousness'), who seems to be a principal-angel who likewise bears a grand status and is counter-posed to Belial, very similarly to the figures designated by the other august epithets previously noted (Kobelski 1981; Hannah 1999: 70-74; but cf. Rainbow 1997). The most extensively preserved such text is in 11QM*Melchizedek* (11Q13), which interprets a number of biblical passages as referring to this figure, and portrays him in remarkable terms. According to this text, 'the sons of light' (who may be angels or humans) are paralleled to 'the men of the lot of Melchizedek' (ii.7-8), who are certainly the righteous human elect, both groups thus notably identified with reference to him. Still more remarkably, the text goes on to interpret the statement in Psa 82:1 that 'God [*Elohim*] will stand in the assembly of God [*El*] as referring to this Melchizedek's prominent role in eschatological judgement, leading the heavenly armies of God to victory over evil. Likewise, the text here interprets the statement in Psa 7:8-9 that 'God [*El*] will judge the peoples' as referring to Melchizedek, who 'will carry out the vengeance of God's judgements' upon 'Belial and the spirits of his lot'

(ii.10-13). Then, in ii. 24-25 yet again, the text claims that the statement 'your God [*Eloheyka*] reigns' (Isa 52:7) refers to Melchizedek, who is to free the elect from 'the hand of Belial'.

This Melchizedek figure may also be referred to in other Qumran texts, including 11Q17 ii.7 and 4Q401 (fragment 11, line.3 and fragment 22, line 3 (these manuscripts the extant remains of copies of 'Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice'). Unfortunately, however, this is yet another instance where the terribly fragmentary state of these particular manuscripts makes it hard to be sure about what was originally claimed. But it seems plausible that Melchizedek may have been ascribed the sort of prominence in these texts that is incontestably attributed to him in 11QM*Melchizedek*. Newsom (Charlesworth and Newsom 1999: 7) proposed that the reference to Melchizedek in 4Q401 (fragment 11, line 3) alludes to Psa 82:1 and the interpretation of this verse that is explicit in 11QM*Melchizedek*, where Melchizedek is the *Elohim* who exercises leadership over the heavenly council and leads in securing the eschatological redemption of the elect.

Many scholars conclude that Melchizedek was originally referred to explicitly in another incompletely preserved Qumran text known as the 'Visions/Testament of Amram' (preserved in fragments of several manuscripts, 4Q543-548). In 4Q544 Amram (Moses' father) dreams of two figures contending over him, one of them of 'dreadful appearance' and the other one with a more friendly face. Then, apparently an angelic interpreter tells Amram that the fearful figure is named 'Melchiresha' (= 'king of evil') whose 'work is dark and in darkness' and who 'rules over all darkness'. It is widely thought that this

Melchiresha is the same figure elsewhere called 'Belial', and that the figure against whom he is portrayed as contending in 4Q544 is Melchizedek, who is then described as having been made 'ruler over all the sons of light' (a restored reading in fragment 3).

In spite of the frustrating lacunae in these Qumran texts, it is still commonly accepted that they reflect a belief in a particular principal angel, who may be designated variously as the 'Angel of Truth', 'the Prince of Light(s)', and 'Melchizedek', and who is likely also the same angel identified as 'Michael'. Notwithstanding disagreements about some specifics (e.g., whether Michael and Melchizedek are the same figure), it seems clear that the Qumran texts reflect a belief in a principal-angel figure who will act in the eschatological situation as chief of God's angelic armies to execute God's judgement upon Belial and the forces of evil and to bring about the vindication and exaltation of God's elect. If the commonly accepted reading 11QMelchizedek is correct, this principal-angel figure can even be portrayed as acting so closely as God's chief deputy that he can be called 'God' (Elohim), and Melchizedek's eschatological prominence can be regarded as the fulfilment of biblical passages celebrating God's supremacy.

That is, we may conclude that the Qumran texts in their own way reflect what seems to have been a view shared more widely in second-temple Jewish tradition that God has a particular principal-agent figure, a heavenly vizier or viceroy of sorts, who has a status over all God's other heavenly courtiers and hosts. Also, as is often the case in other texts as well, in the Qumran references this figure is a high angel. Moreover, as we have seen, this figure can be so closely linked with God's rule and plans

that the actions of this figure are the execution of God's own actions, God portrayed as acting in a remarkably direct manner through this figure. Indeed, as noted, in some cases this principal-angel is described as indwelt by God's name, and can be referred to as 'Elohim' (as rather clearly seems to be the case in *11QMelchizedek*), the supremacy of this figure portrayed as achieving God's own supremacy and reign.

The reference to the elect as 'men of the lot of Melchizedek' (*11QMelchizedek* ii.8) is unusual and particularly noteworthy, identifying the elect specifically with reference to this figure. It is more typical in the other texts from Qumran for the elect to be identified as God's 'lot' (e.g., *1QS* ii.2; *1QM* i.5; xiii.5; xv.1; xvii.7; as noted by Hannah 1999: 71), who are contrasted with Belial's 'lot' (e.g., *1QM* xiii.2, 4). This further illustrates how closely this particular principal-agent figure is associated with God's purposes, such that the elect are explicitly linked with him.

On the other hand, it is equally apparent that in all the texts that we have considered here none of these variously-titled figures is never a rival to *Yahweh*, and never eclipses God; instead they are all consistently portrayed as serving God's purposes. So, for example, Michael will lead the angelic armies in triumph over Belial and the forces of darkness and will bring vindication of the elect, but this will simply be the means by which God's triumphant purposes are accomplished.

It must be emphasised that, whether Michael, or the 'Angel of Truth', or the 'Prince of Light(s)', or the mysterious 'Melchizedek', or the principal-angel figures mentioned in other texts, such as 'Yahoel', this sort of figure is always unquestionably the *agency* for God's own

victory. Indeed, given the ancient imperial settings in which second-temple Jewish religious thought was developed, it seems highly likely that this emphasis on such principal-agent figures was actually intended to avoid any impression that Belial or any other force was any real threat or competitor for God. Instead, God assigns this principal-agent figure to deal with, and dispatch effectively, Belial and all his host.

But the fully subordinate status and role of these figures is perhaps most clearly evident in the evidence of the expression of ancient Jewish religious devotion. For all the exalted descriptions of these various principal-agent figures, they are not themselves the objects of worship. As noted earlier, there are no Jewish sacrifices to them, no altars erected in their honour, neither at Qumran nor in other settings identified as Jewish, and prayers are rather consistently addressed to God. Michael or Raphael may be portrayed as specially involved in seeing that the prayers of God's elect come before God, and angels may be able to act as intercessors on behalf of humans (e.g., 1 *Enoch* 9:3; 40:6), but they are not themselves the ones to whom prayers are directed. Indeed, it is all the more striking that in the very same texts and circles in which the heavenly hosts are highlighted and principal-angel figures are given special attention the prayers of the righteous are addressed directly to God (e.g., 2 *Bar.* 48:1-24; *Tob.* 13).

There is some indication that some Jews did engage in 'magical' practices that included the invocation of angels. But these sorts of actions are not represented in the texts that seem more directly indicative of the piety that was affirmed openly and corporately among second-temple Jews. That is, it would appear that the direct invocation of

angels (instead of God) was something done secretly and did not represent the piety socially approved and affirmed among devout Jews of the second-temple period. In later texts of the rabbinic period we have warnings against undue reverence for angels such as Michael (Schäfer 1975: 67-72). Jews then and subsequently were not monolithic in their practices. Nevertheless, the impetus that drove the interest in principal angels that we have surveyed here did not arise from a weakened view of God's uniqueness or a diminished sense of God's accessibility to the devout.

In his own examination of principal-angel references in second-temple Jewish texts, Carrell (1997: 53-76) reached the same conclusion. Contrary to contentions that figures such as Yahoel represent some sort of 'bifurcation' of God (e.g., Rowland 1982: 94-113; Fossum 1985), Carrell judged that these beings rather clearly remained angels, distinguished from and subordinate to God, and, most importantly, not the objects of worship.

Unquestionably, however, the interest in particular principal angels represents a notable development in ancient Jewish beliefs, and has received justifiable attention from scholars in recent decades. In particular, scholars concerned with the origins of christological beliefs and wider devotion to Jesus in early Christianity have explored and debated the evidence of Jewish interest in principal-angels and related phenomena, and to this discussion we turn in the final part of this study.

CHAPTER 4

ORIGINS OF 'HIGH' CHRISTOLOGY

TO REITERATE a point made at the outset of this discussion, one of the key results of the recently renewed interest in the origins of devotion to Jesus and the exalted christological claims that feature in early Christian writings is that these phenomena can be traced back to the earliest years of the young Christian movement and that they originated circles of Jewish believers (e.g., Hurtado 1988: 93-124). This in turn means that crucially the initial and immediate context in which these influential developments occurred was the Jewish religious tradition of the first century CE. To be sure, the Jesus-devotion that appeared so robustly and so soon after Jesus' crucifixion was not an inevitable development that can be paralleled in or accounted for simply on the basis of Jewish religious tradition of the time (much less on the basis of 'pagan' phenomena). But a number of scholars have explored how earliest Jewish believers might have found in their traditions expectations and also conceptual resources that they drew upon particularly to accommodate and articulate

the exalted status of Jesus as a figure distinguishable from and yet also linked uniquely with God.

This was the main concern of Hurtado's 1988 monograph, which in turn helped to stimulate and shape a number of subsequent studies, including especially other analyses of the relevance of Jewish monotheism and the traditions about high angels. Hurtado contended that the various christological claims reflected in the New Testament and other early Christian texts all essentially represent Jesus as God's 'chief/principal agent', and draw upon Jewish 'divine agency' traditions about this or that principal-agent figure. In ancient Jewish texts, God's principal agent is sometimes a biblical worthy such as Enoch or Moses, or God's personified Wisdom or Word, but perhaps more commonly this status is attributed to the sort of chief-angel figures surveyed earlier in this essay (Hurtado 1988: 93-99). Indeed, chief-angel figures may be particularly relevant, for, as in the case of the resurrected/exalted Jesus, they were represented as holding a heavenly status supreme over all God's other creatures, including other heavenly/divine beings.

Hurtado also concluded, however, that earliest Jesus-devotion represented a novel and very significant 'mutation' in Jewish monotheistic and 'divine agency' tradition, in that Jesus was included programmatically into early Christian devotional practice alongside God in an unprecedented and highly notable manner. In a subsequent essay (Hurtado 1999: 63-97), he laid out more fully this 'binitarian' shape of earliest Christian worship, in which Jesus was revered, not as a second deity, but as the unique agent and expression of the one God, as reflected in a constellation of devotional actions.

These devotional actions quickly became conven-

tional in Christian circles and really have no true precedents or analogies in Jewish piety of the time in the treatment of any other principal-agent figure. They included the invocation of Jesus' name in the initiation rite (baptism), the ritual invocation of Jesus in the worship setting, the corporate ritual confession of Jesus' exalted status ('Jesus is Lord'), prayer either to God in Jesus' name or even directly to Jesus, the singing of hymns honoring him as a regular component of corporate worship, and the designation of the Christian corporate meal as a fellowship with the risen Jesus ('the Lord's Supper'). In short, Hurtado argued that earliest Jesus-devotion both drew upon and modified strikingly Jewish principal-agent traditions, and so represented both obvious continuity with, and a singular innovation in Jewish religious tradition of the time.

A somewhat similar point about the significance of early worship of Jesus as a second figure alongside God had been made somewhat earlier by Bauckham (1981). In particular, Bauckham drew attention to passages in certain second-temple Jewish texts in which a high angel appears to a human seer, who is so struck by the glory of the angel that he starts to worship him but, crucially, is then forbidden to do so by the angel (e.g., Tob 12:16-22; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:111-15). Bauckham then noted that we have this topos reflected also in two passages in Revelation (19:10; 22:8-9). This indicates that the author of Revelation affirmed this strong scruple that God alone was to be worshipped. Bauckham also emphasised how significant it is, thus, that Revelation pictures Jesus as receiving worship along with God (especially 5:1-14). That is, the inclusion of Jesus as recipient of worship in this text which robustly affirms Jewish 'monotheistic'

concerns must signal a singularly high view of Jesus' status.

Bauckham's astute observation about the topos of angelic refusal of worship in certain Jewish texts was followed up in Stuckenbruck's published doctoral thesis (1995), an important study in which he conducted a thorough survey of all references to the veneration of angels, and the limitations of it, in ancient Jewish texts, inscriptions and magical material. Stuckenbruck noted that there was no evidence of a fixed 'cultic devotion' to angels, in the sense of angels being the recipients of corporate worship in the ways that God was in ancient Jewish settings. But he also contended that there were various uses of 'venerative language' with reference to angels: e.g., (1) occasional invocation of angels (but usually with God) for help, vengeance or protection, (2) angels presented as exemplary worshippers of God (e.g., *4QShirShabb*), and (3) expressions of thanksgiving (to God) for actions attributed to angels (Stuckenbruck 1995: 200-3).

Yet he judged that none of these various kinds of 'angel veneration' was conceived as a substitute for, or infringement on, the worship of the one God, noting that 'most often the venerative language [for angels] is followed by an explanation which emphasizes the supremacy of God' (Stuckenbruck 1995: 201). So he urged that this makes it misleading to link this 'angel veneration' in ancient Jewish religion with some alleged weakened sense of God's uniqueness (Stuckenbruck 1995: 202).

With regard to the question of the historical relationship of Jewish 'angel veneration' to the cultic devotion given to Jesus in early Christian circles, Stuckenbruck agreed with Hurtado that there was 'a religio-historical

discontinuity as to the kind and intensity of worship' involved, but also 'a certain traditio- and religio-historical continuity' in the concern to accommodate venerative attitudes toward figures distinguished from God within a firm monotheistic stance. Granting that the kind and level of devotion given to Jesus in early Christian circles represented a significant development beyond the veneration given to principal angels in Jewish tradition, he nevertheless judged that the latter may have provided 'a significant underlying model' that allowed early Jewish Christians such as the author of Revelation to combine reverence for Jesus alongside a commitment to one God (Stuckenbruck 1995: 272-73). In a subsequent study (Stuckenbruck 2004), Stuckenbruck returned to this subject, essentially registering the same conclusions.

Peter Carrell's 1997 monograph (noted briefly earlier) likewise focused on the possible relationship of Jewish interest in angels and the christology of Revelation, his study prompted in part by Rowland's proposal that the portrayal of the risen Jesus in Rev. 1:13-16 was shaped by Jewish angel-traditions (Rowland 1980), and Fossum's somewhat similar contention that in ancient Jewish tradition the divine name and 'angel of the Lord' represented a real divine duality. Carrell concluded, however, that these proposals were not sustained by the evidence, noting in particular that angel-figures such as 'Yahoel' remain distinctly angels and are not recipients of worship. So, although a principal angel could even be portrayed as a '(junior) partner to God', there is no pattern of angel worship (pp. 73-75).

In a study that originated as a PhD thesis supervised by Fossum, Charles Gieschen (1998) sought to make a maximal case for the import and influence of Jewish prin-

principal-angel traditions on early beliefs about Jesus. Gieschen's study is useful in bringing together such a wide variety of texts, including many Christian texts of the first few centuries, but he has rightly been criticised for his handling of some evidence, and a somewhat oversimplified synthesis. It is, for example, not clear that Samaritan texts of the fourth century CE and later can so easily be used as evidence of first-century Samaritan religion (cf. Gieschen 1998: 303-6), or that *Poimandres* and the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature can be used to describe the tradition-historical background of Philippians 2:6-11 (Gieschen 1998: 337-39).

Though focused on the question of early christological appropriation of traditions about Michael, Darrell Hannah's published Cambridge thesis (Hannah 1998) takes account of wider angel-traditions in Second-Temple Judaism. Hannah offers a sophisticated analysis and argues for careful and cogent conclusions. He proposes at least three distinguishable types of 'angelic christology' in early Christian texts: (1) a view of OT theophanic figures such as the 'Angel of the Lord' as the pre-incarnate Christ, reflected in writers such as Justin Martyr, Theophilus, and Irenaeus; (2) a genuine 'angel christology' in which the pre-incarnate Christ was seen as ontologically an angel, as seems to have been the view of the Elchasaïtes and some Valentinian Christians, and perhaps some 'Ebionites'; and (3) an appropriation and transformation of principal-angel traditions as reflected in a number of NT texts including Revelation, Hebrews, and perhaps passages such as Philippians 2:6-11 and John 17 (Hannah 1998: 214-17). But Hannah concluded that angel traditions were only one of several influences shaping earliest beliefs about Jesus (p. 220).

Crispin Fletcher-Louis (1997) controversially contended that in ancient Jewish tradition certain human figures are sometimes portrayed as genuinely divinized (e.g., the high priest in the Jerusalem Temple and the Judean king), and that the line between humans and angels was very fluid. Indeed, Fletcher-Louis claimed that the Jewish high priest was actually worshipped as the 'manifestation of the one Jewish God' (p. 125). On this basis, Fletcher-Louis argued that the worship of Jesus can be explained readily. Early Jewish Christians saw the resurrected Jesus essentially as having been transformed into an angelic being, who as messianic king and heavenly high priest was seen as the rightful recipient of worship. Fletcher-Louis' analysis of ancient Jewish texts has come under criticism, however, and his conclusions have not won wide support. In particular, Fletcher-Louis' claim that the Jewish high priest was worshipped as a manifestation of God seems to most scholars to be unfounded.

Kevin Sullivan's 2004 monograph canvassed impressively the relationship between humans and angels in ancient Jewish texts and the NT, part of his purpose being to test Fletcher-Louis' contentions about the supposed fluidity between human and angelic beings. Sullivan granted a few ambiguous cases in which humans may be portrayed as transformed into angelic beings (e.g., Jacob/Israel in the *Prayer of Joseph*, an apparently Jewish text quoted by Origen). But Sullivan concluded that, although in ancient Jewish texts angels and humans interact in various ways, 'the evidence does not support the idea that there was in the first century a coherent angelomorphic humanity concept that in turn could have been a building block for early Christology' (Sullivan 2004: 232). Nevertheless, he also contended that Jewish

angel traditions did provide earliest Christians with conceptual resources for understanding how Jesus could be understood as 'a superhuman or heavenly being' (Sullivan 2004: 234).

In this body of scholarly studies there remain some differences of emphasis, and one or two more significant disagreements. Of these, perhaps the most significant is whether, as alleged by Fletcher-Louis and a few others, the idea of a human figure bearing angelic or even divine status was a part of ancient Jewish tradition, making the divine significance attached to Jesus in early Christianity simply another expression of this. As indicated already, this view has not found wide favour, and is very much a minority view.

There is broad agreement also that ancient Jewish speculation about principal angels does not account for the appearance of early christological claims. That is, angel speculation did not generate christology. Instead, the impetus of earliest christological claims lies in the formative experiences of early believers, especially experiences which they understood as encounters with, and visions of, of the risen and glorified Jesus. Nor does ancient principal-angel speculation provide a full analogy or precedent for the rich christological claims reflected in the NT. Instead, we should think of Jewish traditions about principal-agents, among which principal angels feature significantly, as among the conceptual resources drawn upon and appropriated by early Christians as they sought to articulate the significance and status of the risen and exalted Jesus.

The evidence of ancient Jewish interest in various principal-agent figures is useful in that it helps inform our picture of the religious and conceptual context in which

earliest devotion to Jesus emerged. Early Jesus-devotion is not a simple case of borrowing, however. There is, for example, no indication of any direct connection of earliest Christians with Qumran. But the Qumran material are valuable nevertheless in showing the lively and diverse nature of second-temple Jewish tradition, and more specifically in illustrating the sort of concepts and terminology available to earliest Jewish believers.

It is also important to note developments and differences as much as connections and similarities. Any living religious tradition develops and so changes, and new religious movements within a tradition typically adapt and re-configure (sometimes in striking ways) ideas drawn from the parent-tradition. In the case of earliest Christianity, there are rather widely noted developments, or what Hurtado has described as 'mutations' that reflect the Jewish matrix in which Christian faith first appeared, and that also represent significant and distinguishing features that mark off early Christian faith as an identifiable new religious movement.

Another of the notable features of early christology is the combination of various honorific categories used in portraying Jesus' status and significance. Among the earliest christological claims is Jesus' messianic status, Jewish hopes/expectations of Messiah figures drawn upon in framing this claim. But Jewish messianic ideas were also distinctively modified in the early Christian conviction that Jesus' crucifixion was a core part of his divinely-ordained messianic work (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:1-8).

In addition it is clear that a wide variety of other honorific categories was drawn upon, particularly 'principal agent' ideas, which included speculations about particular high angels given unique status above all God's

other retinue. So, e.g., Jesus is portrayed as Messiah who brings eschatological redemption (e.g., Acts 2:36), but also as the unique agent through whom God created the world (e.g., 1 Cor. 8:4-6; John 1:1-5), the very image (*eikon*) of God who bears and reflects God's own glory (e.g., 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Heb. 1:1-4), the Michael-like commander/leader of the angelic army who will lead in the final battle against evil (e.g., Rev. 19:11-16), and the one exalted to share the divine name and receive universal acclamation (Philip. 2:9-11). In short, early Christians seem to have drawn upon a wide array of traditions, according to Jesus multiple honorific categories to an extent that seems without real precedent or parallel.

But, to underscore a point registered already, the most striking innovation in early Jesus-devotion was the programmatic incorporation of Jesus as recipient of formal, cultic devotion. The christological rhetoric of earliest Christianity rather consistently can be seen as the appropriation of Jewish/biblical 'principal-agent' traditions, Jesus portrayed as God's unique agent of creation and redemption. But, unlike what seems to have been the case with other principal-agent figures, Jesus was accorded the sort of corporate devotion that was otherwise typically reserved for God alone in devout Jewish circles of the time. In this, too, neither Qumran nor other evidence from second-temple Jewish tradition gives us an analogy or precedent.

So, it appears that their inclusion of Jesus as co-recipient of worship with God amounts to a new 'binitarian' devotional pattern. Perhaps we come closest to something analogous in the *Similitudes* (or *Parables*) of *Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37-71), where in predictive/visionary scenes 'the Elect One' (often referred to as a 'Son of Man' figure) is to

sit upon a glorious throne in eschatological triumph (45:3; 51:3; 61:8; 62:2) and receive the submission and acclamation of all who live on the earth (48:5; 62:3-9). But even here we do not have a true analogy. These scenes in 1 *Enoch* may well be roughly comparable with the sort of future universal acclamation of Jesus held out in Philip-
 pians 2:9-11. But we have nothing comparable to the incorporation of the exalted Jesus as co-recipient of devotion by the gathered circles of believers, which seems to have been characteristic of early Christian groups, both Jewish and gentile. That is, their regular cultic reverence of Jesus was a novel and unprecedented development in the context of typical second-temple Jewish devotional practice.

In summary, in second-temple Jewish tradition a firm commitment to the uniqueness of the one God, expressed both in religious rhetoric and in cultic practice clearly sat easily with beliefs about powerful and exalted adjutant figures, among which principal angels were prominent, sometimes portrayed as uniquely deputized to act in God's name as God's chief agent. In its earliest expressions, Jesus-devotion was a distinctive example of this, albeit novel in ways noted and, of course, particularly noteworthy in terms of its historical impact, the risen/exalted Jesus portrayed as God's uniquely glorious agent of creation and redemption. The Qumran texts have added enormously to our store of evidence concerning second-temple Judaism, and help us thereby to reconstruct the religious context of earliest circles of the Christian movement.

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